

The Shame of Ma Ying-jeou: Chen Shui-bian and Taiwanese Silence

Written by Jack Healey
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Taiwan is under threat. It is not under threat from a military force across the Strait. It is not under threat of economic collapse due to global shifts. It's not even under the level of threat that much of the region is facing due to climate changes. Taiwan is rotting from within, and it is the responsibility of each and every citizen of Taiwan as well as a globe which watches with backs turned that it is such.

Not long ago, Taiwan made strides in human rights and political development to catch up with the economic explosion that preceded it but had sadly left rights and participatory politics behind. Suddenly, Taiwan began to reexamine the legacy of one-party rule and the excesses that were engendered against those who dared to dissent or who merely found themselves on the wrong side of the ruling class. Taiwan was proud of itself and had every reason to be. With a National Health Insurance scheme that is inclusive, a rapidly modernized infrastructure, and an economic engine of innovation and investment, the arts and culture blossomed along with political freedoms.

Now? Those days are gone. Not only is the media divided to the point of being a ragpile on each side, but there is little to no discussion between parties in the unicameral legislature and to say nothing of the dysfunction seen in the judiciary. This problem does not emanate from the character of the Taiwanese, but of the intransigence of the current president Ma Ying-jeou and his unwillingness to recognize that the only civil course of action would be to release Chen Shui-bian on medical and compassionate grounds and to move on.

After all, Ma chose ten solid human rights people to come to Taiwan and make recommendations. They did and the last one was to release Mr. Chen Shui-bian. So did Senator Sherrod Brown of Ohio and Senator Dick Durbin of Illinois as well as many GOP members of Congress.

There is considerable comment on the notion that no release is warranted because Chen is "not that sick" or that the law must be obeyed. It's come from all directions, from (very clearly) government-directed flunkies who issue statements about as persuasive as anything the Soviets used to trot out and it has come from the opposition under the rubric of just letting it pass out of sight, out of mind. However, Mr. Chen Shui Bien sits in a hospital bed in a shanty

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with weekly medical visits.

Here's the thing, though. Chen's incarceration shows the sham of Ma's sensible practices. Firstly, one must believe a staggering conspiracy is at work among the medical community to create a fictive world where Chen is secretly healthy. This is absurd. It is clearly the less-obvious rationale to the idea that the ruling party has instructed people in its direct chain-of-command to issue statements proclaiming the health of Chen. Secondly, it is a dubious practice to have a political party transition (particularly one from the opposition back to the historic ruling single party) made suspect by the immediate prosecution and jailing of Mr Chen.

There is near-universal consensus in the medical community on the gravity of Chen's condition. There has been considerable comment from credible human rights investigators on the continued incarceration. There is a lot of data to suggest that the political grudge-settling that the KMT leadership is engaging in will cause long-term friction in an already fractured society and likely cost them dearly at the polls.

One would imagine that Taiwanese might be galvanized to keep pace and stay in front with regard to political freedoms and sensible medical compassion of prisoners. Sadly, under the increasingly unpopular regime of Ma Ying-jeou, this is not the case. With a dead end at any further run for office, one would imagine that Ma would want to leave a legacy of respect and a model that suggested that old grudges could be buried without burying the hatchet in political opponents. What is happening suggests a strangely concerted effort to cause Chen permanent injury and possibly death out of sight in a prison cell.

If you are Taiwanese and care about human rights, contact nationwide local KMT offices and let them know that you will refuse to vote for any KMT candidate if Ma fails to release Chen on compassionate pardon. If you are a U.S. Citizen, contact your congressional representatives and ask about the commitment to human rights. Let's get the pressure on. Don't let this former president die in prison due to medical neglect and personal political grudges. Move forward, Taiwan. Stand firm on human rights, world. Enough is enough. Justice has been more than amply served with four years served and injuries/disabilities acquired through planned neglect. Let Chen leave the prison and go home. Let Taiwan move into the future with dignity rather than shame.

Source: [Jack Healey's Blog at Huff Post](#)